

The Bred, the Wed, and the Dead, Eh?

An Introduction to Canadian Civil Registration

In Canada, researchers often start by searching for civil registration/vital statistics records or records of births, marriages, and deaths. This class is designed to provide you with a basic understanding of Canada civil registration, including the various types of records, the civil jurisdictions that have responsibilities for the records, and the provincial differences in the availability of those records.

History and Background

- **1864-1905:** Legislation passed by various provinces enforcing registration of births, marriage, and deaths
- **1918:** Statistics Act of 1918 passed, established Dominion Bureau of Statistics
- **1919:** establishment of a national system of vital statistics is approved
- **1926:** national vital statistics report covering all of Canada is published

Provincial Differences

	Type of Record	First Recorded	Most People Record By	Publicly Available After
Alberta	Birth Records	1898	1930	120 years
	Marriage Records			75 years
	Death Records			50 years
British Columbia	Birth Records	1872	1920	120 years
	Marriage Records			75 years
	Death Records			20 years
Manitoba	Birth Records	1882	1920	100 years
	Marriage Records			80 years
	Death Records			70 years
New Brunswick	Birth Records	1888	1920	95 years
	Marriage Records			50 years
	Death Records			50 years
Newfoundland and Labrador	Birth Records	1891	1949	95 years
	Marriage Records			50 years
	Death Records			50 years
Nova Scotia	Birth Records	1864	1908	100 years
	Marriage Records	1736		75 years
	Death Records	1864		50 years
Ontario	Birth Records	1869	Early 1900s	105 years
	Marriage Records	1801		81 years
	Death Records	1869		71 years
Prince Edward Island	Birth Records	1908	1920	120 years
	Marriage Records	1787		75 years
	Death Records	1908		50 years
Quebec	Baptism Records	1679 (Catholic)	1779 (Protestant)	After 1900 civil copies records are confidential
	Marriage Records			
	Burial Records			
Saskatchewan	Birth Records	1888	1920	100 years
	Marriage Records	1878		75 years
	Death Records	1888		70 years

Using Vital Records

Once you have located a civil registration record, make sure to read through and evaluate the record. Read every field. Determine who provided the information (the informant). Also consider which information is primary information (recorded at or near the time of the event) and which information is secondary (recorded after the event).

Finding Vital Records

Many online genealogy websites include vital record collections. Note that vital and church records are often combined. Make sure to evaluate each collection carefully and verify it includes records for the time period and county where your ancestor was born, married, or died.

- **FamilySearch** (<https://www.familysearch.org>) – To view a list of vital record collections, click “Search,” “Records,” and then “Browse All Collections.” Use the “Filter by Collection Title” field at the top left to enter the name of the province and type of record or use the filters on the left.
- **Ancestry** (<https://www.ancestry.com>) (\$) – To view a list of vital record collections, click “Search” and then “Birth, Marriage, and Death” or “Search” and then “Card Catalog.” In the title field, enter the name of the province and type of record or use the filters on the left.

Each province has their own archive or vital statistics office which holds the originals of their civil registration records. Some provinces have online indexes on their webpages to find and order the records for your ancestors, while others only have the ordering webpage. Below are the provincial archives' webpages for their civil registration records.

- **Alberta** (<https://provincialarchives.alberta.ca/how-to/find-birth-marriage-and-death-records>) – Includes online indexes for births, marriages, deaths, and stillbirths. Order records through this site. There is an online guide to order the records on this webpage.
- **British Columbia** (<https://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy>) – Includes indexes to births (1854-1903), marriages (1871-1946), deaths (1872-2001), colonial marriages (1859-1872) and baptisms (1836-1888). Contact the B.C. vital statistics office for ordering more records (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/order-certificates-copies#fees>).
- **Manitoba** (<https://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/Query.php>) - Includes online indexes for births, marriages, and deaths. The instructions on this webpage also include a guide for ordering the records.
- **New Brunswick** (<https://archives.gnb.ca/archives/?culture=en-CA>) – Includes online indexes and images for births, marriages, and deaths. Verified certificates can be requested from the indexes on this site.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador** (<https://www.gov.nl.ca/dgsnl/birth/>) – Order certificates through this site. Most vital records pre-1949 are copies of church records that are held by this division or in the churches themselves. Some of which have been digitized on other websites.
- **Nova Scotia** (<https://archives.novascotia.ca/vital-statistics/>) – Includes online indexes and images for births (1864-1877, 1908-1921), marriages (1763-1946), and deaths (1864-1877, 1908-1971). To order more recent records, see <https://beta.novascotia.ca/vital-statistics-fees-certificates-licences-and-services> .
- **Ontario** (<http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/tracing/vsmain.aspx>) Includes information on the partner websites that have digitized their records and made them available online. To order more recent records, see <https://www.orgforms.gov.on.ca/eForms/start.do> or order them through Service Ontario <https://www.ontario.ca/page/official-government-id-and-certificates> .

- **Prince Edward Island** (<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/search-public-archives-material-online>) - Includes online indexes and some images for baptisms, marriages, and deaths. For more information on ordering vital statistics, see <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/birth-marriage-and-death-certificates?number=1050111&lang=E> .
- **Quebec** (<https://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/default.html>) – Beginning in 1926, individuals could choose to register vital events civilly instead of going through a church. In the 1960s, this practice became more common. In 1994, the government started recording all vital records civilly instead of relying on church records. Because of rights-of-privacy laws, the public does not have access to civil copies of parish registers from 1900 to the present. There are very strict limitations to ordering these copies; for information on ordering the civil records, see the website mentioned previously.
- **Saskatchewan** (<https://www.ehealthsask.ca/residents/genealogy>) – Includes online indexes for births, marriages, and deaths at online indexes for births and deaths at http://genealogy.ehealthsask.ca/vsgs_srch.aspx . They anticipate having a marriage index in the future, but that will come at a later date after the death index is complete.

Learn more about civil registration and vital statistics records at:

- **FamilySearch Research Wiki**
 - **Canada** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Canada_Vital_Records) – Learn about general Canada civil registration history and links to some resources for other information.
 - **Provinces** – Use the following links for each civil registration page for the different provinces. On each page, you can find links to collections, general history, and information on archives and record holders for vital statistics.
 - **Alberta** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Alberta_Civil_Registration)
 - **British Columbia**
(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/British_Columbia_Civil_Registration)
 - **Manitoba** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Manitoba_Civil_Registration)
 - **New Brunswick**
(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_Brunswick_Civil_Registration)
 - **Newfoundland and Labrador**
(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Newfoundland_and_Labrador_Civil_Registration)
 - **Nova Scotia** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Nova_Scotia_Civil_Registration)
 - **Ontario** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ontario_Civil_Registration)
 - **Prince Edward Island**
(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Prince_Edward_Island_Civil_Registration)
 - **Quebec** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Quebec_Civil_Registration)
 - **Saskatchewan**
(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Saskatchewan_Civil_Registration)